

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 6339

EXDIS

DEPT PASS NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ARA FOR TODMAN ONLY

NSC FOR PASTOR ONLY

S/AB FOR BUNKER: POPPER ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PN
SUBJ: HOST COUNTRY REACTIONS ON PANAMA CANAL TREATY

REF: STATE 219477

1. PRIVATE AND GOE REACTIONS TO BOTH THE TREATIES AND
AND CEREMONY CONTINUE TO BE FAVORABLE. THE CEREMONY
IS SEEN AS A UNIQUE EVENT BRINGING TOGETHER A LARGE
NUMBER OF LEADERS IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FRIENDSHIP AND
COOPERATION, FROM WHICH MAY FLOW A NUMBER OF BENEFITS.

2. THE MAJOR TOPIC OF DISCUSSION, IN BOTH PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE CIRCLES, IS THE POTENTIAL FOR INITIATING DIS-
CUSSIONS WITH PERU OVER BORDER QUESTIONS. THIS IS,
HOWEVER, A PRODUCT OF THE BILATERAL BETWEEN PRESIDENTS
CARTER AND POVEDA AND WILL BE DISCUSSED IN DETAIL IN
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SEPTEL.

3. TREATY SIGNING ITSELF HAS BEEN SEEN BY SOME
POLITICIANS AND OTHER PRIVATE OBSERVERS AS A VICTORY FOR
LATIN AMERICA IN THE ONGOING EFFORT TO DEFEND AND
EXTEND ITS RIGHTS VIS-A-VIS THE UE. QUITO DAILY
EL COMERCIO ON SEPTEMBER 11 PUBLISHED INTERVIEWS WITH

LEADERS OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES, MOST OF WHOM WHILE FAVORABLE IN THEIR COMMENTS ABOUT THE US. TOOK THIS "LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY" LINE. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT LEADER OSWALDO HURTADO WAS QUOTED TO EFFECT THAT THE TREATIES ARE SECOND ONLY TO THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AS LANDMARKS ON THE ROAD TO LATIN AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE. OTHER LEADERS NOTED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PROGRESS ON A NUMBER OF FRONTS IN THE WAKE OF THE SIGNING CEREMONY AND THE SERIES OF MEETINGS AMONG HEMISPHERIC PRESIDENTS. THE ONLY POLITICAL LEADER TO EMPHASIZE TREATIES AS ACHIEVEMENT IN US-LA UNDERSTANDING WAS RODRIGO SUAREZ OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

4. AS REVEALED BY OUR NUMEROUS CABLES ON NEWS MEDIA REACTION, THE RESPONSE HAS BEEN OVER-WHELMINGLY FAVORABLE. EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS CITED THE EVENT AS A LONG-AWAITED NEW AND REFRESHING ATTITUDE OF THE USG, AND HAS LAVISHED PRAISE ON PRESIDENT CARTER.

5. GOE OFFICIALS, SUCH AS THE FOREIGN MINISTERS, GIVE CREDIT TO THE USG, AND ESPECIALLY TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION FOR TAKING A DIFFICULT STEP IN AN EFFORT, NOT ONLY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM WITH PANAMA, BUT TO IMPROVE US-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO IS NORMALLY SPARING IN HIS PRAISE FOR THE US., HAS TOLD ME THAT THE TREATIES CONFIDENTIAL

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STITUTE A MODEL FOR THE PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF OTHER SUCH PROBLEMS IN THE HEMISPHERE (READ ECUADOR/PERU BORDER DISPUTE). HE SAID HE INTENDS IN HIS FORTHCOMING US. SPEECH TO REFER TO "THE SPIRIT OF WASHINGTON."

6. THE ONLY NEGATIVE REACTION TO DATE HAS BEEN SOME EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN WITH REGARD TO FUTURE TOLL LEVELS. THIS HAS BEEN A LONG-STANDING CONCERN OF THE GOE WHICH, HOWEVER, FOR REASONS OF "LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY", IT HAS CHOSEN TO SLFT-PEDAL. COMMENTS ON TOLLS SINCE THE SIGNING HAVE ALSO BEEN MUTED, LEADING ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE ISSUE WILL REMAIN A SECONDARY, IF REAL, CONCERN.
BLOOMFIELD

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